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AUTHOR Stansbury, Donald; Palitz, Merriem
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ABSTRACT

Beginning with the fall semester, 1983, California required all community colleges to test their students on minimal writing competency before being granted an Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree. This guide explains the ways in which students at Bakersfield College may complete this requirement (i.e., by initial placement into English 1A after taking the English Classification Test, then completing English 1A with a "D" or better, or by completing English 1 with a "C" or better and passing the writing competency test) and outlines the procedures and criteria for evaluating writing competency. The guide indicates that in order to demonstrate minimal competency the student must: (1) respond appropriately to the writing task; (2) maintain a consistent point of view; (3) organize according to a logical plan; (4) support general statements with appropriate specific details or examples; and (5) correctly use the conventions of standard English. Evaluation score sheets and corresponding sample essays are presented, along with materials for the instructor including examples of student sentences, observations and comments about the test, and a list of activities for improving student success. (EJV)

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WRITING COMPETENCY TEST

Donald Stansbury

and

Merriem Palitz

Professors of English

Bakersfield College

Bakersfield, California

JC 850 520

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WRITING COMPETENCY TEST

Beginning with the Fall Semester, 1983 the state of California is requiring all community colleges to test their students on minimal writing competency before being granted an AA or AS Degree. This "writing competency requirement" at Bakersfield College may be completed in the following ways: (1) initial placement into English 1A after taking the English Classification Test (and writing the essay) and then subsequently completing English 1A with a "D" or better; (2) completing English 1 with a "C" or better and passing the writing competency test, which is the final examination of English 1. Should students fail to pass English 1 and/or the writing test, they may take either of them again after appropriate counseling.

The writing competency test consists of a single expository/ argumentative essay evaluated by a panel of English 1 teachers using a standard scale of minimal writing skills. The test is not particularly difficult or demanding, providing the student has attained the writing skills. English 1 is designed specifically to teach students those skills and help students attain the required competency.

The essay that students write in the test will be evaluated as follows: each anonymous paper (identified by number only) will be read in a "blind" reading (where each evaluator is unaware of the other evaluator's score on the paper) by two English 1 teacher-evaluators, who will score it based on the criteria below. If these two evaluators are in agreement (pass or fail), then that is the result for the essay. Should, however, the two evaluators disagree (one pass, one fail), a third evaluator will rate the paper to break the tie. The criteria for evaluation being used are as follows:

To demonstrate minimal competency, the student must

1. Respond appropriately to the writing task
2. Maintain a consistent point of view, tone, and sense of audience
3. Present a single main idea or thesis
4. Organize according to a logical plan
5. Use a variety of sentences which are free from gross grammatical or usage errors
6. Support general statements with appropriate specific details or examples
7. Use words appropriate to the rhetorical purpose
8. Signal changes in purpose and/or argument with transitions

9. Use correctly the conventions of Standard English, including spelling and punctuation.

10. Provide a legible manuscript

NOTE: A significant failure in any <u>one</u> of the categories will result in failure of the Writing Competency Test.

Each of these criteria will be explained to you and developed in greater detail during the course of the semester. The entire English 1 course, in fact, has been designed with the main goal of helping you attain competency in all of these skills before you take the test at the end of the semester. The actual attainment of the skills--and the writing competency--is, however, up to you. You must study conscientiously and practice writing daily to be assured of success.

Good luck!

WRITING COMPETENCY TEST

EVALUATION CRITERIA (Primary Traits):

The following primary traits are intended as guides for evaluators in evaluating Writing Competency Test papers. Since the test attempts to determine "minimal writing competence," the criteria must be interpreted reasonably, not rigidly. Few students will be able to meet any of the criteria with one hundred percent accuracy.

Evaluators should determine if the student

1. Responds to the writing task. A student who writes on the assigned topic with a reasonable seriousness of purpose--i.e. attempts to do what was asked in terms of paper length, adherence to subject, and rhetorical strategy--will meet the criterion. Papers which do not address themselves to the topic assigned, papers which are frivolous or confused, or papers which are inadequately developed in terms of the required length will fail this criterion.

2. Maintains a consistent point of view, tone, and sense of audience. A student who presents a reasonably consistent position in respect to the topic, without abrupt and confusing shifts in voice or tense, and who maintains an appropriate attitude toward both topic and audience will meet the criterion. Papers that shift grammatical point of view, or papers which fluctuate in attitude toward subject and reader will fail this criterion.

3. Presents a single main idea or thesis. A student who expresses a single idea--either by implication or in a single statement--that covers the topic and the writer's purpose will meet the criterion. A paper which wanders off the main idea or jumps from one idea to another without any clear controlling idea will fail this criterion.

4. Organizes logically and coherently. A student who organizes the paper according to a discernible plan and maintains that organization coherently will meet the criterion. A reader is able to follow the ideas and specifics presented with relative ease. A paper which wanders randomly through the topic or which jumps from idea or specific to another without any apparent organization will fail this criterion.

5. Develops ideas into paragraphs that contain supporting detail. A student who presents several ideas subordinate to the main idea and who provides a reasonable amount of specific detail or examples with reasonably clear signals of transition will meet the criterion. Papers which offer only vague ideas without specific support will fail this criterion.

6. Uses a variety of sentences that are free from gross grammatical errors. A student who varies the sentence patterns (simple, compound, complex) for emphasis and balance and who avoids grammatical errors (misplaced parts, shifts, faulty predication, etc.) will meet the criterion. Papers which utilize one dominant sentence pattern (e.g. simple sentence) or which present sentences that are grammatically faulty will fail this criterion.

7. Chooses words appropriate to the rhetorical purpose. A student who selects words and phrases which are precise and appropriate to the paper's purpose, avoiding jargon, cliches, or slang (unless pertinent to meaning), will meet the criterion. Papers which use imprecise, unclear, or inappropriate words, or papers which lack variety in word choice will fail this criterion.

8. Uses correctly the conventions of Standard English. A student who spells most common words correctly, punctuates for precision and meaning, and avoids gross errors in usage (subject, verb, pronoun agreement, verb tense and aggreement, pronoun case, etc.) will meet the criterion. Papers which contain numerous misspelled words, badly punctuated sentences, and errors in usage will fail the criterion.

(4B)

The Signs of Unpopularity

Wanting to be popular amongst one's peers is not an unfamiliar desire to anyone. Everyone has the needs to be accepted, understood, and respected; yet along with these needs come certain attitudes and responsibilities that must be carried-out in order to attain said goal. Any drastic shifts in these attitudes and responsibilities may bring about undesirable effects resulting in unpopularity. With these shifts in mind, what are some of the ways an individual can make himself unpopular?

First of all, not thinking of others is a great way to start. People who spend their entire lives looking-out for number one not only make very few friends, but usually live very lonely livers. This kind of person is so concerned about his own little world that he never takes the time to realize that there are other people who might have a lot to offer him. People need to be accepted as they are with no strings attached.

Setting so high an expectation level that people can't meet it only does harm to the individual concerned. ~~Treat people the way~~ Unpopularity is a sure road to the person who thinks only of himself.

Secondly, not getting involved is another sure-fire way to unpopularity. Participation is the name-of-the-game. A person who doesn't let himself be known surly can't expect to be noticed. Getting involved in a sport, or joining an organization, or running for public office is the road for the individual with popularity in mind. If a person doesn't take a chance, but instead closes himself off to opportunity, he can't expect to go ~~any~~ Anny where and must remain unpopular.

Third and finally, ~~not ticking~~ unpopularity comes to the person who doesn't like himself. Everything else in this entire world hinges on this attitude. God said, "love thy neighbor as you would love thyself." That golden rule can also be read, love thyself as you would love thy neighbor. There are many people in this world who treat others better than they treat themselves. This kind of self-torture

can be very distructive mentally as well as physically, and can also lead to a very unpopular life-style. The whole attitude of respect for the individual involved centers around this idea: If a person believes he can't make it, he won't; if a person gives up before all the cards are drawn, he may lose his entire hand.

Unpopularity is an aggravating word that sticks in the mind of each of us. Hopefully each and every person will remember the ways an individual can make himself unpopular, then work his hardest to go through those problems and become just a popular as he desires.

EVALUATION
SCORE SHEET
WRITING COMPETENCY TEST

DIRECTIONS: Place a check mark in one of the value boxes (Fail=F or Pass=P) for each of the eight evaluation criteria.
NOTE: A "fail" on any one of the below criteria results in a failure of the entire test.

Essay Code
584

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Evaluator

	3		2	4	1	10
	P	F	P	F	P	F
1. Responds to the writing task						
2. Maintains a consistent point of view, tone, and sense of audience						
3. Presents a single main idea or thesis						
4. Organizes ideas logically and coherently						
5. Develops ideas into paragraphs that contain supporting detail						
6. Uses a variety of sentences that are free from gross grammatical errors				✓		✓
7. Chooses words appropriate to the rhetorical purpuse						
8. Uses correctly the conventions of Standard English (including spelling and punctuation)				✓		✓
				✓		✓

Writing Competency Test Result
PASS _____ FAIL X

Unpopular Person

Almost anyone can make himself unpopular among his peers. ~~Some~~ the ways in which a person can make himself unpopular to his peers are by ~~or~~ being overbearing, dishonest, mischievous and gossiping behind their backs.

The first way, a person can become unpopular is by bossy ~~to~~ his ~~peers~~ people around him. He will ~~be~~ be disliked for his bossiness to them. For example, he would order them around as they don't know anything. Also by acting like he knows everything and is smarter than they are.

Secondly, he would be dishonest to his peers. Also he would lie to get into a position that he wants. Furthermore, he would give away secrets that would help

him to achieve the position or ~~have something~~ the things that he wants. For example, he would be dishonest to his friends just so that he would get the job, instance of his friend getting it. Also he would discredit anyone who stands in his way of his achievement.

Thirdly, he can make himself unpopular by playing practical jokes on his peers. No one likes to be laughed at, ~~expressionally~~ expressionally went it isn't very funny to them. For example, he would play a joke on them knowing that it would cause harm or injury to them personality. This would cause a dislike feeling to him and would make him unpopular to the person that the joke was on. Furthermore, a practical joker isn't well liked by people, who ~~thinks~~

will think at it is very childish to play jokes on people went it can hurt their feelings.

Finally, he can become unpopular by gossiping behind people's backs. ~~This~~ Untrue gossiping would make people dislike you and they will not believe in what you said. ~~But~~ In gossiping about a person behind their backs with untrue stories will really make the person dislike you. For instance, he would gossip to anyone who ~~tells~~ ~~someone~~ people ~~some~~ ~~thing~~ would listen about someone who ~~you~~ ~~which~~ ~~they~~ ~~you~~ doesn't ~~don't~~ want anybody to know about it will hurt their ~~your~~ feelings and will make ~~him~~ ~~they~~ ~~thinks of you in a differently~~. you unpopular in their ~~view~~ ~~veew~~ of you.

Those are some ways in which a

person can make himself unpopular to his peers. ~~There~~ A unpopular person will make no friends unless he change his way of life by stopping his dishonest, ~~bossy~~ bossiness and ~~of~~ practical joker ways.

WCT
Evaluation Session
Nov. 1, 1984

Evaluator	Essay No./Fail Criteria 1	2	3	4	5	6
MP	$F_{6,8}$	F_{5}	F_{1}	P	$F_{6,7,8}$	P
CH	P	$F_{7,8}$	$F_{5,8}$	P	$F_{6,8}$	P
RM	F_{5}	P	F_{1}	P	$F_{6,8}$	P
DW	P	$F_{6,7,8}$	F_{1}	P	$F_{6,7,8}$	P
CC-R	P	$F_{6,7}$	F_{1}	P	$F_{6,7}$	$F_{4,6,7}$
ML-H	$F_{6,8}$	P	F_{1}	P	$F_{2,5,8}$	P
JL	F_{6}	F_{8}	F_{1}	P	$F_{6,8}$	P
FS	P	$F_{2,7,8}$	P	P	$F_{2,6,8}$	P
Original WCT Evaluation	P	$F_{6,7}$	$F_{1,8}$	P	$F_{6,8}$	P
Agreement with Original	4 50%	6 75%	7 88%	8 100%	8 100%	7 88%

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Writing Competency Test
Student Sentences

--Puberty hits, and once loving children turn into hell-raising teenagers.

--Normally cats do not make very good physical security; unless a person has a very big cat that won't eat the owner instead of the burglar.

--For energy conversation perhaps a solar system would be ideal.

--Everyone would be able to use the large kitten.

--It is very difficult to examine a woman while she is bending over backwards trying to be the perfect woman.

--Dating, which normally involves some roll playing, should be...etc., etc.

--When two people are uninhabited about sharing their thoughts....

--(A blind person's) sight-seeing dog.

WRITING COMPETENCY TEST
Some Observations

1. Since the beginning of the Writing Competency Test program (Fall Semester, 1983) the English Department has tested approximately 450 English 1 students at the end of each semester (English 1 final exam). The actual total of tested students (not counting students who re-take the test after an initial failure) for the three semesters is 1411.

2. Overall, approximately 68% of the students tested pass the test on the first try. Actual pass-rate percentages are as follows: end-term Fall 1983 = 70.3% (310 students out of 441); end-term Spring 1984 = 61.5% (272 students out of 442); Summer School 1984 = 60.7% (37 students out of 61); end-term Fall 1984 = 72.4% (338 students out of 467).

3. Overall, approximately 32% of the students initially tested fail on the first try.

4. Some of the students who fail the test the first time re-take it in subsequent semesters (133 so far), and others repeat English 1. Of the ones who re-take the test approximately 42% pass (57 students out of 133). Actual percentages of students passing on re-takes are as follows: mid-term Spring 1984 = 48% (10 students out of 21); end-term Spring 1984 = 41% (16 students out of 39); Summer School 1984 = 44% (8 students out of 18); August, 1984 =56% (10 students out of 18); mid-term Fall 1984 = 25% (2 students out of 8); end-term Fall 1984 = 38% (11 students out of 29).

5. Spring Semester and Summer School pass results are lower than Fall Semesters: 61% pass in Spring and Summer compared to 70-72% in the Fall.

6. When we compare the results of small classes to larger classes, we find that small classes at end-term pass a <u>much</u> higher percentage of students on the first attempt: class size of 15 and below = 82.5% (some individual classes as high as 90-100%); class size of 15-20 = 80.5%; class size of 20-30 = 66.9%.

7. The overall pass rate of evening classes at the main BC campus is approximately 60%; at DTC approximately 50%; at Delano Center approximately 36%.

8. The pass rate of full-time regular English teachers is higher than either partial load English teachers (those full-time teachers who teach an occasional English 1) or part-time teachers.

WRITING COMPETENCY TEST
Comments

--CAUTION: This statistical information is valid for general impressions only, since so many variables (some unknown or impossible to take into consideration) affect the results. We can get some idea of the effectiveness of the WCT program, but we should not interpret the figures too rigidly.

1. Total numbers: This figure includes some students (not many) who have taken the test before, since some students who fail re-enroll in English 1 and take the test as the final exam of their current class. Students who are not currently enrolled in English 1 take the test as a "re-take" and are counted separately.

2. These figures may not accurately reflect the numbers of students who complete the COMPETENCY REQUIREMENT (completion of a course and passing a written test), since a student may pass the WCT and yet not earn a passing grade in the course.

3. Many of these students take English 1 over again and are successful; some re-take the test later and pass (or fail); some drop out of school. Some students are given extra office tutoring by their instructors and eventually pass.

4. Fail-safe procedures built in to our procedures attempt to prevent injustice. We are very much aware that the test prevents students from moving toward their goals so is SERIOUS.

5. Many variable account for these lower percentages: main reason is that there is a larger proportion of poorer students in Spring and Summer. The Fall Semester contains a higher proportion of students coming directly from high schools who are placed Level A on the English Placement Test.

6. Again, there are many variables to account for the differences in class size at the end of the semester: students carry too heavy a class load and drop; students leave school; they don't like the teacher, the course, the work, etc.; they get married, get a job, go into the armed services, etc. These statistics reflect the common sense belief (and research) that small class size is essential for success in writing courses.

7. These figures reflect the weaker student populations attending these classes and the amount of time devoted to the course. English 1 at night is three hours per week--25% less than the four hours in the day classes.

8. This statistic again reflects the common sense belief that full-time, regular English teachers will do a better job than those who have only a partial commitment.

WRITING COMPETENCY TEST
Things To Do

1. Track those students who fail repeatedly to find out why they continue to fail (particularly foreign students and bilingual student minorities).

2. Develop programs to help students who continue to fail (possibly EFL programs of C. Willard, Learning Center help, English 1 teachers reviewing failed papers with students, writing clinic, tutoring, etc.).

3. Continually review English 1 methods and objectives for improvement.

4. Conduct more training sessions for WCT evaluators and bring in night, part-time, DTC, and Delano instructors to help them improve their success rate with the WCT.

5. Review existing WCT procedures and standards for fairness and accuracy. Compare what we do with recent research on competency testing and the practices of other community colleges.

6. Improve our placement procedures to make certain that students are being placed into classes that will help them (we are currently reviewing the ITED as a placement instrument).

7. Review exit criteria from English 60 to maintain a correlation with English 1 goals and objectives.

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